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1.3.3. Separatist movements

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2021

[Main COI reference: Targeting, 3.3]

In the South East of Nigeria there are several groups aiming for secession, among which the two main groups are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (**MASSOB**) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (**IPOB**). Both organisations claim to be non-violent and aim to reach secession through referendum. They mostly engage in awareness-raising activities, marches, and other gatherings. However, the leader of IPOB has reportedly endorsed violence as means for resuscitating Biafra.

In March 2016, MASSOB and IPOB issued a joint statement that all Fulani herdsmen should retreat to northern Nigeria, as ‘their safety [could] no longer be guaranteed’.

MASSOB was banned by the Nigerian authorities in 2001 and its members were accused of being ‘armed criminals and robbers’. In 2017, the Nigerian authorities declared IPOB a terrorist organisation.

Since August 2020 violence between IPOB and the Nigerian security forces has escalated, with reported killings of civilians and retaliatory security incidents. Violence has taken the form of armed clashes and IPOB has also been accused of attacks against police stations. In December 2020, IPOB established a paramilitary wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and armed clashes with Nigerian state forces ensued. A ceasefire was declared in January 2021, however clashes continued. [Security situation 2021, 1.3.2.5, 1.4.1.1]

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